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THE GAMBIA

**ANNUAL MEDICAL  
AND  
SANITARY REPORT  
FOR THE YEAR  
1939**

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**Price : Two Shillings**

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BATHURST:  
PRINTED BY THE GOVERNMENT PRINTER.

1940



# Annual Medical and Sanitary Report for the year ended 31st December, 1939.

## I. ADMINISTRATION.

### LIST OF ORDINANCES, RULES AND REGULATIONS AFFECTING PUBLIC HEALTH ENACTED DURING THE YEAR, 1939.

Order No. 1 of 1939—10th January, 1939:

Applying Part V of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, 1935 to certain drugs.

Order No. 2 of 1939—10th January, 1939:

Applying Part V of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, 1935 to any preparation, admixture or other substance containing any proportion of certain specified drugs.

Order No. 4 of 1939—10th January, 1939:

Revoking and replacing the Second Schedule to the Dangerous Drugs Regulations, 1928.

Order No. 5 of 1939—24th January, 1939:

Permitting the slaughter of sheep and goats in Bathurst during the 31st day of January, 1939.

Order No. 6 of 1939—10th January, 1939:

Delimiting the application of Part V of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, 1935 to certain specified preparations.

Ordinance No. 24 of 1939—15th September, 1939:

“ The Midwives (Amendment) Ordinance, 1939 ”.

Amends section 4 of the Midwives Ordinance, 1935 with a view to assimilating its provisions with those of the corresponding sections of the Imperial Midwives Act.

Ordinance No. 26 of 1939—15th September, 1939:

“ The Hospitals and Dispensaries Ordinance, 1939 ”.

Provided for the management of public hospitals and dispensaries and super-sedes the Hospitals and Dispensaries Ordinance, 1901.

Regulation No. 15 of 1939—25th September, 1939:

“ The Hospitals and Dispensaries Fees Regulations, 1939 ”.

Prescribes the fees and charges to be paid for accommodation, treatment and maintenance in public hospitals and dispensaries.

Regulation No. 21 of 1939—6th November, 1939:

“ The Public Health Regulations, 1939 ”.

Prohibits the slaughter of cattle, etc., in certain towns except in the public slaughter houses and by persons authorised in that behalf by the Native Authority. These Regulations replace Public Health Regulations (Nos. 4 and 5) of 1937.

Order No. 19 of 1939—6th November, 1939:

Amending Orders No. 2 of 1936 and No. 10 of 1935.

Ordinance No. 33 of 1939—15th December, 1939:

“ The Registration of Medical Practitioners and Dentists (Amendment) Ordinance, 1939 ”.

Enables graduates of the Medical School in Nigeria to be registered in this Colony. This is intended to make it possible for persons who may find the expense of medical training in the United Kingdom prohibitive to obtain registrable qualifications at the Higher College, Yaba.

## FINANCIAL.

### *Medical and Health Services.*

	Estimated.	Actual.	Increase.	Decrease.
	£	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Revenue ... ..	2,720	3,004 5 0	284 5 0	2,331 11 2
Expenditure ... ..	33,515	31,183 5 10	—	—



*Miscellaneous Services.*

	Estimated.	Actual.	Deficit.	Excess.
	£	£	£	£
Contributions to Colonial Fund ...	200	200	—	—
Savings ...	—	—	—	—

*Colony.*

	Estimated.	Actual.
	£	£      s.      d.
Total Revenue ...	170,000	151,744      6      3
Total Expenditure ..	219,973	205,883      19      9

1. The actual expenditure on Medical and Health Services was 15.1 per cent of the total expenditure of the Colony.

**II. PUBLIC HEALTH.****A. GENERAL REMARKS.**

2. 1939 was a year of all-round improvement in administration in the Medical and Health Services. Much needed instructions to Medical Officers and subordinate staff were printed, making clear to each officer his duties and responsibilities; and the decentralisation of control of routine matters was furthered in every way.

3. Progress was more than maintained in the training of staff, those who could not be encouraged to improve being forced to do so.

4. The Dispensary attendants started in dispensaries. They have been found perfectly suitable for the work, and decidedly more sympathetic to the indigenes than most of the Dispensers recruited from the coastal areas.

5. A new Dispensary was opened at Balingho and the dispensary at Kaiaff closed for the wet season. It was re-opened at the beginning of the dry season. Kaiaff is at present too inaccessible in the wet season and will be used as a dry season dispensary only until such time as it can be visited regularly throughout the year.

6. All other institutions remain the same as in 1938.

7. Trypanosomiasis received further investigation. A very thorough survey of the North Bank was made by Dr. Bowesman in May and June. He made complete examinations of over 12,000 people in less than two months, every single suspect being examined microscopically. He found that the average infection rate was 3.21 per cent of those examined. This is probably somewhat higher than the actual rate as practically all sick people of the district were brought to him whilst by no means all of the population was examined. On Dr. Bowesman's findings a scheme for an anti-sleeping sickness campaign has been drawn up and the necessary financial assistance requested.

8. Further investigations were made in the South Bank Province, but it was only possible to select a few villages at random. The infection rate appears to be roughly the same as in the North Bank Province.

9. Preliminary investigations into the efficacy of a new drug—May and Baker “ 744 ”—were also carried out by Dr. Bowesman and Dr. Lourie of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. It seems probable that an excellent drug for use in early cases has been found.

## I. GENERAL DISEASES.

10. A table of the incidence of certain disease groups is given elsewhere in this Report.

## II. COMMUNICABLE DISEASES.

11. There was nothing of importance to report during the year. Mosquito borne diseases were the normal ones. There was no yellow fever.

12. Smallpox was the only infectious disease which gave the department any concern during the year. Sporadic cases occurred in increasing numbers towards the end of 1939, but the immediate vaccination and re-vaccination of all possible people around these areas prevented the disease becoming epidemic in any part.

13. Venereal diseases cause much concern. Gonorrhoea is more easily cured than formerly and this is bound to have some effect in due course, but until it is possible to treat the woman as well as the man in every case no great benefit except the elimination of many of the complications can be expected.

14. Soft chancre and lymph granuloma inguinale are becoming increasingly common.

15. Helminthic diseases are practically universal. Ankylostomiasis is very common in Bathurst.

## B. VITAL STATISTICS.

## (1) GENERAL AFRICAN POPULATION, BATHURST.

Estimated Population	...	...	...	...	...	...	14,245
Total births	...	...	...	...	...	...	407
Total deaths	...	...	...	...	...	...	325
Total still births	...	...	...	...	...	...	47
Deaths under one year	...	...	...	...	...	...	64
Birth rate	...	...	...	...	...	...	28.6 per 1,000 population.
Death rate	...	...	...	...	...	...	22.8 per 1,000 population.
Infantile mortality	...	...	...	...	...	...	157.2 per 1,000 births.
Still births	...	...	...	...	...	...	115.4 per 1,000 life births.

16. Registration is compulsory in Bathurst. It has been introduced into the Protectorate but it is too unreliable at the moment to be of any statistical value.

## (2) GENERAL EUROPEAN POPULATION.

Total estimated number was	...	...	...	...	...	189
Total number of deaths was	...	...	...	...	...	3
Death rate	...	...	...	...	...	15.15 per mille.

Causes of deaths were:—

Cardiac failure.  
Bronchitis.  
Cerebral Hæmorrhage.

## (3) EUROPEAN OFFICIALS.

17. There were forty-one officials on the sick list as compared with thirty-one in 1938.

TABLE SHOWING THE SICK, INVALIDING, AND DEATH RATES OF  
EUROPEAN OFFICIALS.

	1937.	1938.	1939.
Total number of Officials resident ... ..	69	71	72
Average number resident ... ..	62	61	64
Total number on sick list ... ..	51	31	41
Total number of days on sick list ... ..	420	235	350
Average daily number on sick list ... ..	1.15	0.64	0.95
Percentage of daily sick to average number resident ... ..	1.85	1.05	1.48
Average number of days on sick list for each patient ... ..	8.23	7.58	8.53
Average sick time to each resident ... ..	6.08	3.85	5.46
Total number invalided ... ..	3.00	2.00	5.00
Percentage of invalidings to total residents ... ..	4.34	2.81	6.94
Total deaths ... ..	—	—	—
Percentage of deaths to total resident ... ..	—	—	—
“ “ “ average number resident ... ..	—	—	—
Number of cases of sickness contracted away from residence	—	—	—

Causes of Invalidings :—

- (1) Sub acute melancholia and neurasthenia.
- (1) Asthma and emphysema.
- (1) Gastritis.
- (1) Sub-tertian malaria and anaemia.
- (1) Anxiety neurosis associated with gastric disturbances.

(4) AFRICAN OFFICIALS.

18. The health of the African Officials was normally good throughout the year.

TABLE SHOWING THE SICK, INVALIDING, AND DEATH RATES OF  
AFRICAN OFFICIALS.

	1937.	1938.	1939.
Total number of Officials resident ... ..	391	396	406
Average number resident ... ..	341	345	354
Total number on sick list ... ..	415	533	222
Total number of days on sick list ... ..	2,070	3,548	1,550
Average daily number on sick list ... ..	5.67	9.72	4.24
Percentage of daily sick to average number resident ... ..	1.66	2.81	1.19
Average number of days on sick list for each patient ... ..	4.98	6.65	6.98
Average sick time to each resident ... ..	5.29	10.28	4.37
Total number invalided ... ..	6.00	5.00	5.00
Percentage of invalidings to total residents ... ..	1.53	1.26	1.23
Total deaths ... ..	5.00	8.00	2.00
Percentage of deaths to total residents ... ..	1.27	2.02	0.49
“ “ “ average number resident ... ..	1.46	2.31	0.53
Number of cases of sickness contracted away from residence	—	—	—

Causes of Invalidings :—

- (1) Leprosy.
- (1) Optic atropy and presbyopia.
- (1) Cardiac failure.
- (1) Mental degeneration.
- (1) Sacro iliac disease in conjunction with severe fibrositis.

Causes of Deaths :—

- (1) Labor pneumonia.
- (1) Myocarditis—heart failure.



*Morbidity in the Police.*

Average daily strength	...	...	...	...	134.6
Total number on sick list	...	...	...	...	187.6
Total number of days on sick list	...	...	...	...	943.0
Average daily sick	...	...	...	...	2.5
Total number of deaths	...	...	...	...	Nil
Death rate per thousand	...	...	...	...	Nil
Number invalided during the year	...	...	...	...	3

## III. HYGIENE AND SANITATION.

## A. GENERAL REVIEW OF WORK DONE.

*(1) and (2) Preventive and General Measures.*

19. *Sanitary Work.*—The usual sanitary works were carried on throughout the year, whilst efforts were made to expand sanitation in the Protectorate. Concrete bush type septic tanks were installed in many towns. The number of fly-proof meat stalls in the towns of the Protectorate was also increased, and two more slaughter slabs erected.

20. The drainage of Bathurst was fairly satisfactory during the wet season, for except in the bad Half-Die area, standing water never presented any problem.

21. The pumps at Box Bar worked well, but as no alternative gravity outflow has been provided all water from this area has now to be pumped out.

22. The rainfall in Bathurst was 42.17 inches for the year.

23. In spite of the satisfactory year it is obvious that the drainage system of Bathurst requires renovation. The number of obstacles to the flow of water which have accumulated in the system is very great. The removal of these would, I believe, greatly improve conditions.

*(3) School Hygiene.*

24. Very close co-operation existed between the members of the Education and Medical Departments, and this co-operation was further enhanced by the appointment of a member of the Medical Department as the Commissioner of Scouts.

25. The first year of individual records for each school child entailed much work for the Medical and Education Departments and cannot, of course, be used for the formation of any conclusions about the children of Bathurst, but there is no doubt whatsoever that they are exceedingly backward both mentally and physically. Large numbers of defects were found, such as hernie and enlarged tonsils, and appropriate measures taken. It was impossible with the staff available to do pathological examinations but many of the children were treated on clinical signs alone for helminthic affections. A very high incidence of trachoma was found, except in one or two cases however it was of a very mild degree.

26. The importance of correct physical training was emphasised in every possible occasion. In spite of continued example there are still many children who consider it shameful to remove their shirts in public and so enjoy the benefit of fresh air and sunlight on their skins. Their number is however slowly decreasing. As large numbers of the children also wear sun helmets it is obvious that many of them cannot be getting the amount of sunlight which is essential, especially to Africans, for normal healthy life.

27. 1,518 school children were medically inspected during the year.

*(4) Labour Conditions.*

28. The position in regard to labour is the same as before, Legislation designed to eliminate or prevent various abuses is projected.

(5) *Housing and Town Planning.*

29. The Building Regulations for the Protectorate have received approval and now await necessary legislation. Owing to the war much work has had to be postponed but it is only postponed. A detailed survey was completed of housing in Bathurst.

(6) *Food in Relation to Health and Diseases.*

30. A big drive during the year was made by all to increase food supplies. This drive received added impetus owing to the war and the rise in prices of imported foodstuffs.

31. A valuable booklet stating dogmatically the principles of diet and giving the necessary tables of local foodstuffs, with a large assortment of recipes, was published and put on sale during Health Week, whilst demonstrations of cooking and market produce were also staged.

32. The slaughter house and the attached cold store chamber in the Bathurst market have functioned satisfactorily.

33. Market gardening again shows an increase throughout the country.

## B. MEASURES TAKEN TO SPREAD KNOWLEDGE OF HYGIENE AND SANITATION.

34. The usual measure of demonstration and enforcement have been augmented by broadcast talks, lectures and informal talks with influential people. The elected members of the Bathurst Advisory Town Council have co-operated in every possible way, and have given invaluable help.

35. Film demonstrations were also given. One film thus shown was locally made by the Medical Officer of Health with local people as the actors. This film was greatly appreciated.

## C. TRAINING OF SANITARY PERSONNEL.

36. Courses of lectures were given and models and demonstration appliances made and explained.

## D. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK.

37. The main desiderata are a sleeping sickness campaign, the already projected scheme for the improvement of sanitation in the Protectorate, and the provision of more and more septic tanks and incinerators in the Protectorate towns and villages. Correlated with the latter is the provision of more and more composting pits for the utilisation of household and garden refuse. It is hoped that the extension of this will lead to the indigenes even composting their field rubbish. The Agricultural Department is co-operating heartily with the Medical in this matter.

## IV. PORT HEALTH WORK AND ADMINISTRATION.

38. There were no quarantine periods.

39. Two hundred and nine ships were boarded during the year.

40. One hundred and fourteen aeroplanes or seaplanes landed.

41. The provision of a Bathurst Port and Sanitary Station equipped to disinfest and disinfect was approved but has been held up owing to the war. It is hoped to get this in 1940.

## V. MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE.

42. The work of this department increases yearly.

The figures are:—

Number of patients admitted to the Wards ...	...	...	...	...	193
„ confinements ...	...	...	...	...	117
„ mothers attending the Clinics ...	...	...	...	...	445
„ children visiting the Clinics ...	...	...	...	...	460
„ babies on the Clinic Register was ...	...	...	...	...	460



43. Two cases of tetanus neonatorum occurred during the year. They were both in children whose mothers had been delivered by unqualified and unregistered Midwives.

44. It is now a criminal offence for any unregistered person to act as accoucheur except in an emergency.

45. Work in the two outside Clinics at Sukuta and Cape St. Mary also increased and large numbers of the babies there competed in the Baby Day competitions.

46. A band of Lady Voluntary Workers have undertaken the work of visiting the children who are too old for the clinic work and too young for school. These ladies are doing invaluable work. Larger numbers will soon be required but it is not anticipated that there will be any difficulty in obtaining further volunteers.

47. It is proposed to station a Midwife at Basse in 1940.

#### VI. HOSPITALS AND DISPENSARIES.

48. There are three hospitals at Bathurst, Bansang and Bwiam, and seven Dispensaries at Cape St. Mary, Kaiaff, Georgetown, Basse, Kau-ur, Balingho and Kerewan.

49. A new Dispensary was opened at Balingho.

#### DENTAL REPORT.

50. Mr. Uel M. John, Dental Surgeon in Freetown, Sierra Leone, attends in Bathurst each year for three months.

51. The following is a summary of the work he did in Bathurst in 1939:—

Government Officials inspected	...	...	...	...	...	103
School children inspected	...	...	...	...	...	1,975
Total	...	...	...	...	...	2,078
Fillings	...	...	...	...	...	360
Root fillings	...	...	...	...	...	10
Dressings	...	...	...	...	...	48
Extractions	...	...	...	...	...	136
Repairs to dentures	...	...	...	...	...	7
Pyorrhoea	...	...	...	...	...	3
Sealings	...	...	...	...	...	58

52. It has been learnt with regret that Mr. John was accidentally drowned in Freetown early in 1940.

#### VII. PRISONS AND ASYLUMS.

53. The following figures show the general health and death rate of prisoners during the year:—

Average daily number	...	...	...	...	63.1
Total number on sick list	...	...	...	...	145.0
Average daily number on sick list	...	...	...	...	0.3
Total number of deaths	...	...	...	...	Nil
Death rate per thousand	...	...	...	...	Nil
Lunatics, under observation in the Prison, died during the year	...	...	...	...	2

54. Four certified lunatics were sent to Kissy Asylum in Freetown during the year.

#### LUNACY.

55. An observation Home for lunatics was constructed in 1939. It is hoped that it will be ready for use early in 1940.

56. Special staff for this Observation Home was recruited and is now under instruction.

TABLE SHOWING DISEASE GROUPS TREATED IN GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS  
AND DISPENSARIES, 1939.

				IN-PATIENTS.	
				Total cases treated.	Deaths.
Total Cases Treated	...	...	...	1,572	159
Diseases of Digestive System	...	...	...	212	14
Infectious and parasitic diseases (excluding Malaria fever)	...	...	...	275	37
Diseases of the skin and cellular tissues	...	...	...	165	13
Non-Venereal diseases of the genito-urinary system and annexa	...	...	...	161	—
Diseases of respiratory system	...	...	...	155	38
Affections due to violence	...	...	...	108	8
Diseases of the bones and organs of locomotion	...	...	...	80	13
Malaria fever	...	...	...	74	4
				OUT-PATIENTS.	
				Total cases treated.	Deaths.
Total Cases Treated	...	...	...	30,250	
Diseases of the respiratory system	...	...	...	6,345	
Infectious and parasitic diseases (excluding Malaria fever)	...	...	...	4,655	
Diseases of the digestive system	...	...	...	6,125	
Rheumatism, Diseases of Nutrition and of Endocrine Glands, etc.	...	...	...	2,399	
Diseases of the skin and cellular tissues	...	...	...	2,267	
Malaria fever	...	...	...	1,668	
Diseases of the nervous system and sense of organs	...	...	...	1,654	
Affections due to violence	...	...	...	1,574	
Non-Venereal of the genito-urinary system and annexa	...	...	...	1,131	
Diseases of the bones and organs of locomotion	...	...	...	785	

C. WILSON,  
*Senior Medical Officer.*

